

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7805

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GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR SHERER

DEPARTMENT PASS DIA FOR AH, DOD/ISA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CZ, UA

SUBJECT: VE CELEBRATIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

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1. SUMMARY. ZANTOVSKY (HEAD SIXTH DEPARTMENT MFA) ASKED CHARGE TO COME IN MARCH 25 AND PRESENTED FIRST REPLY TO EMBASSY'S NOTE OF MARCH 18 CONCERNING ATTENTION TO US ROLE IN LIBERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. IN GENERAL, ATTITUDE EXPRESSED BY ZANTOVSKY WAS POSITIVE AND COOPERATIVE. IN PARTICULAR, HE STATED CZECHOSLOVAK WILLINGNESS TO HELP COMMEMORATE ACTIONS BY US FORCES IN WESTERN AND SOUTHERN BOHEMIA. END SUMMARY.

2. READING FROM HANDWRITTEN NOTES, AND WITH TEXT OF US NOTE
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BEFORE HIM, ZANTOVSKY GAVE DETAILED REPLY. HIS BASIC MESSAGE

WAS THAT CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENT WISHED TO HELP IN COMMEMORATION OF US ROLE IN LIBERATION OF PARTS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. DISCUSSING HISTORY OF END OF WORLD WAR II, HE SAID THERE WAS NOT DOUBT SOVIET TROOPS HAD PLAYED LARGEST ROLE, EVEN THOUGH NATIONALS OF MANY COUNTRIES HAD PARTICIPATED IN LIBERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. BUT CZECHS HAD NO DESIRE OR NEED TO REWRITE HISTORY, AND ROLE OF US IN LIBERATING PART OF BOHEMIA SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED, AND PARTICULARLY REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO DIED ON CZECH SOIL.

3. COMING TO SPECIFICS, ZANTOVSKY ADDRESSED FOUR TOPICS. FIRST, OUR PROPOSAL FOR WREATH-LAYING CEREMONIES IN SOUTHERN AND WESTERN BOHEMIA. GOC BELIEVED SUCH CEREMONIES WERE PROPER AND FITTING, AND NOT ONLY APPROVED THEM BUT WISHED TO SUPPORT AND HELP ARRANGE THEM. SPECIFICALLY, MFA WOULD HELP SEE TO IT THAT MOD (WHO HAD ALREADY BEEN CONTACTED ON THIS) WOULD SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO MAIN CEREMONIES WHICH EMBASSY PLANNED, AND WOULD ALSO HELP ARRANGE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO BE PRESENT. MOREOVER, IN LOCALITIES WHERE US REPRESENTATIVES WOULD NOT BE PRESENT, LOCAL AUTHORITIES WOULD PLAN TO LAY WREATHS. HE ADDED THAT GOC WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HAVING US VIEWS ABOUT PLACES WHERE PLAQUES OR MEMORIALS DID NOT EXIST BUT MIGHT SUITABLY BE ERECTED. CHARGE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THIS COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE, AND PROMISED INFORMATION. HE NOTED IN PASSING THAT IN AT LEAST TWO CASES WE KNEW OF PLAQUES THAT HAD BEEN REMOVED WITHIN RECENT YEARS. ZANOTVSKY PROMISED TO LOOK INTO POSSIBLE REINSTALLATION OF THESE.

4. SECONDLY, ZANOTVSKY REFERRED TO POSSIBILITY, RAISED BY CHARGE MARCH 18, OF US VETERANS TAKING PART IN CEREMONIES. (HERE ZANOTVSKY NOTED THAT GOC POSITION WAS FIRM ON FIRST POINT, WREATH-LAYING AND COMMEMORATIONS IN WESTERN AND SOUTHERN BOHEMIA, BUT POSITION WAS STILL DEVELOPING ON OTHER POINTS, AND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS TENTATIVE PENDING FURTHER DISCUSSION.) IN PRINCIPLE, GOC FAVORED VISITS BY US VETERANS. IT WOULD LIKE TO SEE PARTICIPATION IN WREATH-LAYING CEREMONIES (AND ALSO IN US RECEPTION, SEE BELOW) BY (A) US AND CZECH VETERANS OF WWII, (B) US AND CZECH MILITARY REPS, AND (C) SOVIET ARMED FORCES REPRESENTATIVES. NO MENTION WAS MADE OF PAYMENT FOR US VETERANS' VISIT. CHARGE PROMISED TO INFORM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEPARTMENT OF THIS FAVORABLE ATTITUDE IN PRINCIPLE TO VETERANS' VISITS AND TO ASK MORE INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS.

5. THIRDLY, ON US RECEPTION, WHICH CHARGE HAD MENTIONED IN PASSING MARCH 18 AS POSSIBILITY BEING CONSIDERED. ZANTOVSKY SAID IF SUCH RECEPTION WERE HELD, GOC WOULD PROBABLY AGAIN FAVOR ATTENDANCE BY US AND CZECH VETERANS AND MILREPS AND ALSO SOVIET REPS. HE SAID PERHAPS SPIRIT COULD BE SOMEWHAT

LIKE REUNIONS OF US AND SOVIET VETERANS OF MEETING ON THE ELBE. CHARGE SAID RECEPTION STILL TENTATIVE, AND ONE REASON PLANS NOT FIRM WAS UNCERTAINTY ABOUT DATES FOR CZECHOSLOVAK CELEBRATIONS OF VE DAY. ZANTOVSKY SAID HE ALSO DID NOT KNOW THESE DATES. CHARGE PROMISED TO PROVIDE FURTHER INFO ON POSSIBLE RECEPTION.

6. FINALLY, ZANTOVSKY ASKED IN ROUND-ABOUT WAY ABOUT US POLICY TOWARDS ATTENDANCE AT CZECH CELEBRATIONS OF VE DAY. THIS LED TO FAIRLY LONG DISCUSSION OF WWII AND RESPECTIVE ROLES IN IT. ZANTOVSKY AGAIN NOTED MAJOR ROLE USSR IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. CHARGE RECALLED HIS SERVICE IN FRANCE, AND SAID ALTHOUGH SOVIET TROOPS NEVER WERE ON FRENCH SOIL, ON VE DAY MOST FRENCH TOWNS FLEW ALL FOUR FLAGS, FRENCH-SOVIET-US-UK. SINCE US DID PLAY HONORABLE ROLE IN ACTUAL LIBERATION CZECH TERRITORY, WE WANTED THIS RECOGNIZED. CHARGE ALSO BROUGHT UP UNFORTUNATE PRESS CAMPAIGN NOW GOING ON IN WHICH US ROLE IS DISTORTED AND FALSIFIED. CHARGE GAVE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES, AND SAID WE WOULD RATHER HAVE SILENCE THAN DISTORTION: FACT IS WE WERE NOT ENEMIES OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN WWII, WE WERE ALLIES, AND PRESS SHOULD SAY SO. ZANTOVSKY SAID HE AGREED, AND THOUGHT PRESS SHOULD HAVE ARTICLES ON ROLE US PLAYED. (COMMENT: THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.)

7. COMING BACK TO QUESTION OF US POLICY ON ATTENDANCE, CHARGE SAID POLICY SET BY AMBASSADOR WAS THAT IF INVITATION SAID "LIBERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA," WE COULD ATTEND, BUT IF IT SAID "LIBERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA BY SOVIET ARMY," WE WOULD NOT ATTEND, BECAUSE THAT FALSIFIED US ROLE. ZANTOVSKY THEN SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT EMPHASIS NOW BEING ON THE ANTI-HITLER COALITION, AND ON THE ALLIANCE, SO THAT US ROLE WOULD GET PROPER RECOGNITION. STRESSING THIS ALLIANCE ASPECT, HE SAID "WE ARE NOW TRYING TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY.") (COMMENT: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IT COULD BE THAT OVERALL INSTRUCTIONS FROM MOSCOW ON EE CELEBRATION OF 30TH ANNIVERSARY HAVE RESULTED IN DIFFERENT FOCUS HERE WHICH WOULD INDEED PROVIDE ROOM FOR MORE RECOGNITION OF US ROLE, ALTHOUGH THIS REMAINS TO BE PROVEN. IT IS TRUE THAT ZANTOVSKY DID NOT MAKE ANY COMMITMENTS ABOUT OVERALL CELEBRATION, ONLY ABOUT PROPER RECOGNITION ON THE GROUND IN SOUTHERN AND WESTERN BOHEMIA.)

8. ZANTOVSKY ASKED CHARGE TO COME BACK FRIDAY MARCH 28 AT 3:30 TO DISCUSS PLANS MORE SPECIFICALLY. EMBASSY WILL PROVIDE SUGGESTIONS ABOUT WREATH-LAYING SITES AND CEREMONIES AT THAT TIME. IN MEANWHILE, IF SHORT TIME ALLOWS DEPARTMENT TO REPLY, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENT ON PROPOSALS IN GENERAL (PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS SOVIET PARTICIPATION) AND SPECIFICALLY ON VISIT BY US VETERANS (WHICH WE UNDERSTAND

DEPARTMENT WOULD ARRANGE FROM THAT END). EMBASSY'S VIEW
(PENDING FURTHER COMMENTARY BY AMBASSADOR SHERER) IS THAT GOC
IS CHANGING PAST POLICY AT LEAST IN PART, AND WE SHOULD
DEFINITELY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPENING BEING OFFERED. IF THIS
MEANS WELCOMING RUSSIANS TO THE CELEBRATION, WE SHOULD BE
PREPARED TO DO SO.

9. FOR AMBASSADOR SHERER: IN LIGHT OF CZECH VIEWS, IT
APPEARS THAT RECEPTION MIGHT NOW BE GOOD IDEA AFTER ALL.
WE HAD HOPED FOR BRIEF TALK WITH YOU ON THIS BEFORE FRIDAY
MEETING, BUT THAT NOW APPEARS OUT. IF YOU HAVE INSTRUCTIONS,
PLEASE CALL OR CABLE. OTHERWISE WE WILL PROCEED
TENTATIVELY WITH PLANS FOR WREATH-LAYING MAY 7 AND
SMALLISH RECEPTION MAY 8.
PERRY

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